

WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

NAME OF SITE	Oldtown to Harrylock Bay
Other names used for site	
IGH THEME	IGH2 Precambrian to Devonian Palaeontology, IGH10 Devonian
TOWNLAND(S)	Houseland
NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE	Fethard
SIX INCH MAP NUMBER	49
ITM CO-ORDINATES	675300E 601800N (centre of section)
1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER	76 GSI Bedrock 1:100,000 Sheet No. 23

Outline Site Description

The site comprises coastal cliffs and foreshore in a section approximately 500m long.

Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The site consists of a 500m long coastal cliff section through the upper part of the Old Red Sandstone Harrylock Formation, of Devonian age.

Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

This site contains one of the best examples of continental fining upward sequences in Ireland and therefore is of considerable sedimentological interest. In addition, it has a varied representation of late Devonian plants and trace fossil material. Several of the localities along the section are the type localities for Late Famennian (Upper/Late Devonian) megaspore and miospore species. The site has great importance for both geological research and teaching.

The beds are gently dipping and younging southwards and so it is relatively easy to follow the stratigraphical succession as the base of each fining upward cycle is marked by a prominent conglomerate, in a sequence of well-developed fluvial fining upward cycles. Several of the mudstones and siltstones in the finer grained part of these cycles contain important Late Devonian macro plants such as *Archaeopteris hibernica*, cf. *Cyclostigma* and *Barinophyton*; abundant spore floras from which many new species have been described; and finally a number of excellent examples of *Beaconites* type trace fossils. Fuller descriptions of specific features and horizons with fossils exist but are too detailed for this report.

Site Importance – County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

This is an important Devonian palaeontological site of national importance and has been recommended to NPWS for designation as a geological NHA.

Management/promotion issues

It is not possible to access the complete section at high tide, and care should be taken accessing the section at any tide. The site is an almost continuous coastal cliff section starting at a point just south of Shoal Rock in Oldtown Bay, then extending northwards for approximately 500m to where a stream meets the coast at the southern end of Harrylock Bay. Access to the site is from the south. Leave the main road approximately 300m south of the Porters Gate junction and take a small track westwards to Lumsdin's Bay. Proceed northwards along the beach and rocky foreshore to a prominent recess in the cliff just south of Shoal Rock.

It is recommended that this Devonian coastal section is included in any Fossil Collecting Code developed for the Hook. Any attempted collection of fossils or rocks, other than as loose material, should be strongly discouraged and reported to NPWS and/or GSI.



The site seen from the north end (cliff before Harrylock Bay) looking south.



The site seen from the south end (cliff above Shoal Rock) looking north.



One thick sandstone unit at the base of one cycle.



The trace fossil *Beaconites* is locally abundant.



The thick sandstone units at the base of each cycle tend to form ribs of rock into the sea.



The cliffs show numerous recent landslips.

